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STATE FOR SA, PM AND EAP
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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AS](#)

SUBJECT: DUTCH, CANADIAN AMBASSADOR'S VIEWS ON AFGHANISTAN
COMMITMENTS

Classified By: Ambassador Robert D. McCallum for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C/REL AUS, UK, CANADA) At our quarterly U.S.-UK-Canada-Netherlands lunch on October 19, Dutch Ambassador to Australia Niek van Zutphen commented that senior Dutch officials were sincere in voicing continuing support for the Netherlands' troop commitment in Afghanistan, but faced formidable domestic political obstacles. Chief among these were the issue of burdensharing, specifically the prevalent belief that Dutch forces were doing more than their share compared to other countries, especially NATO partners, and the apparent lack of progress on the reconstruction and security fronts, especially in the face of a resurgent Taliban. Together these factors created negative optics with significant political implications in the Netherlands, which would come to a head in The Hague during the December 2007-January 2008 timeframe.

[¶2.](#) (C/REL AUS, UK, CANADA) Ambassador Zutphen confirmed that the Netherlands had approached Singapore regarding provision of a field hospital in Oruzgan, and Slovenia and other European countries to seek troop contributions, but, while he was optimistic, he offered no guarantee of positive responses.

[¶3.](#) (C/REL AUS, UK, CANADA) Ambassador Zutphen urged that the United States use its influence with other countries, including NATO partners, to again urge them to participate in Afghanistan or to increase their contributions of forces and reconstruction inputs.

[¶4.](#) (C/REL AUS, UK, CANADA) Canadian High Commissioner Michael Leir noted that political pressures in Canada were similar, particularly the issue of burdensharing. High Canadian casualties had made Canada's involvement in Afghanistan a major political issue. For Canada, it was not so much a question of cost, as the political impact of the optics, he added.

[¶5.](#) (C/REL AUS, UK, CANADA) Leir noted that a Dutch decision to remain in Afghanistan would not improve the political climate in Canada, whereas a Dutch withdrawal would certainly increase political pressure in Canada to follow suit. He observed that the decision would be made in Ottawa next year whether to extend Canadian participation beyond 2009.

MCCALLUM